A *MAQĀMAH* ON PALM-PROTECTION (*SHIRĀḤAH*)

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THE importance of the date-palm to the traditional economy of Ḥaḍramawt is abundantly evident in the literature of the country and when living there one is impressed by the reliance of the people not only on the date harvest but on all parts of the palm for building, fencing, fuel, the manufacture of domestic articles, and the like. Some sixty years ago Paul Popenoe[1] quoted an estimated figure of 200,000 date palms for Ḥaḍramawt, contrasted with only 100,000 for the Yemen. No doubt, reports[2] to the erstwhile Aden Protectorate and South Arabian Federal Governments might contain more precise statistics. In those days also V. H. W. Dowson,[3] the expert on the date culture of Iraq, visited the country and has published an excellent account of the use of dates there. It was a British objective to promote and extend palm cultivation, and I recall hearing the late Sayyid Sir Bū Bakr b. Shaykh Āl Kāf tell the British Resident that owing to this policy the danger of famine had been largely removed due to the relative abundance of dates. It is a popular saying that in times long ago one could travel the whole length from the top of the Wādī down to the Prophet Hūd's Tomb under the shade of palms, and judging by the clear signs of cultivation in many areas now desert, this may well have been true.

Raiding the date crop of a neighboring district has doubtless gone on from time immemorial—it is frequently recorded in Ḥaḍramī chronicles. Shanbal, for instance, speaks of a Banū Ẓannah/Ḍannah raid in 635/1237-38 in which they cut the *kharīf* crop.[4] Ḥaḍramīs discovered that palms could be destroyed by pouring kerosene (*ghāz*)[5] into the center top of the tree—a wanton act in a country where years of labor and investment are required to create this valuable asset. In Ruḍūm of the Wāḥidī Sultanate in 1947 I saw dead palms belonging to the Mashāyikh, who said this was done by the tribesmen, but these latter said they were hungry and had asked for dates, which the Mashāyikh refused to give them. According to an article in *Al-nahḍah*, "the first to make use of this method to destroy palms in Dawᶜan were men of the Dayyin tribe (east of Wāḥidī territory), more than twenty-five years ago (from 1951 on) when the struggle between them and the Dawlah (the Quᶜayṭīs?) was at its fiercest."[6]

Palm protection (*shirāḥah*) by armed tribesmen doubtless remounts to antiquity and not less so the malpractice and exactions of the tribes who undertake the

1 Paul Popenoe, "Scale-Insects of the Date-Palm," *JAOS* 42 (1922): 205-6; idem, "The Pollination of the Date-Palm," *JAOS* 42 (1922): 343-54. Cf. *Lughat al-ᶜArab* (Baghdad, 1926), vol. 4, p. 298.

2 *The Department of Agriculture Report for 1958-63:* Protectorate of South Arabia, Aden, gives production for the whole area in 1963 as 7,500 tons, but this is clearly a guess.

3 V. H. W. Dowson, "The Date and the Arab," *Journal of the Royal Central Asiatic Society* 36 (1949): 34-41; idem, "To Arabia in Search of Date Palm Off-Shoots," *JRCAS* 39 (1952): 45-66.

4 This appears in my as yet unpublished edition of this Ḥaḍramī chronicler.

5 *Qazzaz* is the verb derived from *ghāz*.

6 *Al-Nahḍah* (Aden), III, 105, 21 December 1950, p. 2.

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protection. *Al-jawhar al-shaffāf*, composed in the first half of the ninth/fifteenth century, alludes to palm guardians taking the fruit from the trees that do not belong to them to give to others "as is the custom of the guardians of the palm trees of Ḥaḍramawt (*ka-mā huwa ʿādat ḥurrās nakhīl Ḥaḍramawt*)."[7] It is against the abuses of this protection that Sayyid Ṭāhir inveighs in the *maqāmah* I published thirty years ago.[8]

The word *shāriḥ* (plur., *sharaḥ* and *shurrāḥ*) is basically used of those protecting, for example, millet against the depredations of birds, usually children armed with slings (*naḍaf*). Al-Yāfiʿī under the annals for 694/1294-95 quotes the following passage: *Mā lī wa-li-ʾm-ḥirāsah; anā anzil min am-mishbāb wa-atruk am-zarʿ*, "What have I to do with guarding (crops)? I shall get down from the *mishbāb* and leave the crop."[9] He describes the *mishbāb* as "pieces of wood set up in the middle of the crops" upon which is constructed an *ʿarīsh*, "hut," in which the guardian (*ḥāris*) sits. The protection, in this case in Shāfiʿī Yemen, is against thieves and wild animals. The ground or area which comes under the protection of an armed tribesman is called in Ḥaḍramawt *mishrāḥ*, and *māl* means there "property in palms." Any man who possesses *māl* is called a *ṭabīn*.[10] The *ṭabīn* hires a laborer skilled in date-palm culture to look after his property, and we even have the text of a typical contract between them in *Al-nubdhat al-muḥarrirah* of Baḥraq.[11] In Ḥaḍramawt the *ṭabīn* is very often a Sayyid, but he may belong to one of the other classes; and my informant Raḥayyam who owned a few palms was himself a shaykh. It might be that in ancient south Arabia the *MŚWD* (Ḥaḍramī Musawwad, i.e., Sayyids) could at the same time have contained in their ranks individuals who were *ṬBNN* or *ṭabīn*s.[12] At any rate, there were, until fairly recently, three main classes interested in the palm-groves of Ḥaḍramawt: the owner, the share-cropping cultivator, and the tribesman-protector.

Of course palm proprietors, even Sayyids, would not necessarily invariably hire laborers to look after their palms, especially before the nineteenth century, for the pious Sayyid Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Saqqāf[13] used to recite the *sūrat* Yā Sīn every time he planted a palm, notwithstanding the number he planted and his continuous activity in this direction. Evidently he then attended to his palms, at least to some extent, in person.

[7] Cf. my article "Materials for South Arabian History II," *BSOAS* 13 (1950): sec. iii, p. 582 (SOAS photocopy II, 279).

[8] Ibid.

[9] Al-Yāfiʿī, *Mirʾāt al-janān* (Haydarabad, A.H. 1337-39), vol. 4, p. 226; al-Sharjī, *Ṭabaqāt al-khawāṣṣ* (Cairo, 1321/1903), p. 44.

[10] The *ṭabīn* is usually a person who advances money and/or items in kind to a sharecropper. Popular verses such as the two obscene allusions to the *ṭabīn*'s wife (see my *Prose and Poetry from Ḥaḍramawt* [London, 1951] p. 164, nos. 51, 52) show the dislike the sharecropper feels for his *ṭabīn*, while another (no. 55/3) says, "The well-worker runs away and the *ṭabīn* is demanding." On the other hand another (166, no. 76) says,

As for me, nobody has a *ṭabīn* like mine,
He's brought my "feast," Barbarī sheep
tethered by twine.

By "feast" the feast gift is intended.

[11] Baḥraq, "Forms of Plea, Šāfiʿī Manual from al-Šiḥr," *RSO* 30 (1955): 10 ff.

[12] Cf. Jacques Ryckmans, *L'Institution monarchique en Arabie méridionale avant l'Islam* (Louvain, 1951) 22: "Selon N. Rhodokanakis (in D. Nielsen, *Handbuch der altarabischen Altertumskunde* [Copenhagen, 1927], p. 122), le terme *mśwd*, que l'on retrouve à Saba et Qataban, où il s'oppose respectivement aux termes *mshnn* et *thnn*, qui désignent l'ensemble des propriétaires terriens, se rapportait aux membres d'une classe privilégiée parmi ces derniers."

[13] Sayyid ʿAbdullāh b. Muḥammad b. Ḥāmid al-Saqqāf, *Tārīkh al-shuʿarāʾ al-Ḥaḍramiyyīn* (Cairo, 1353/1934), vol. 2, p. 173.

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Perhaps under certain conditions palm protection was a reasonable affair, but this had apparently not been the case for a very long time. Raḥayyam himself could plainly remember the days before its abolition, which in 1948 were not yet remote. He said that the tribes from Tarīm down to Hūd were poor and hungry and, so, especially practiced palm protection, but those between Tāribah and Saywūn, better off, engaged little in palm protection (this part of the Wādī as far as the Wādī Dawᶜan received remittances from Java and the Far East). According to Van den Berg,[14] however, the Sultan of Saywūn had persuaded his tribes to accept the re-purchase of protection-fees, i.e., those prior to 1886, and it is the Kathīrī perhaps to which Raḥayyam alluded. The palms in the wādīs about Saywūn belong to *ᶜabīd*, "slaves."

Van den Berg states that the fee, originally 10 percent, sometimes amounted to over half the crop. Raḥayyam was more explicit. The tribes exacted a fifth on crops (*ḥawāṣil*), especially dates, and tithes (*ᶜushūr*) on millet-cane (*qaṣab*) and grain (*ṭaᶜām*). There are in fact, he said, two types of protection, *shirāḥah buṭl wa-ẓulm*, "palm-protection of invalidity and oppressive (taxation)," namely a fifth of the crop; and *shirāḥah ṣamīl*, "palm-protection by club," meaning by agreement, namely a tenth or twentieth of the crop. The former is a forced contract, and the latter is at the discretion of the owner. The term "protection by club" arises from the fact that the man who looks after the crop bears a club as a weapon—the characteristic arm of the *miskīn*,[15] here the peasant—in contradistinction to the *qabīlī* who bears a rifle. In the case of grain or fruit the *qabīlī* takes his fee at the time of harvesting.

It was probably the representations of the proprietors who suffered under this regime, supported by reference to Islamic *sharīᶜah*, that persuaded the British Resident of the time, W. H. Ingrams, to press for the termination of *shirāḥah buṭl*.

In the case of *shirāḥah ṣamīl*, a *qabīlī* or a *miskīn* may be hired; he then makes himself a hut (*ᶜarīsh*, plur., *ᶜurūsh*) of palm-frond (*saᶜf*), and, if a *qabīlī*, he leaves his gun there. If anyone steals the dates this man deals with him. Should the thief be known, the case is one which is dealt with by the customary law of the protecting tribesman. If the thief is not known the palm warden informs the palm proprietor that he did not commit the theft himself, but he gives the owner no compensation for his own failure in his duty.

The *qabāʾil* divide up the palm growing lands into sectors. Each sector comes under the protection of a certain tribal group or individual, or at least so the tribes claim, though the palm proprietors may think differently. The tribes may even have recourse to the owners of the land in question to define the exact extent of ground the latter own so as to support their own intertribal disputes about the land which comes under their protection.

[14] L. W. C. Van den Berg, *Le Ḥadhramout et les colonies arabes dans l'archipel indien* (Batavia, 1886), p. 79.

[15] For the distinction between *masākīn ḥaḍar*, merchants, craftsmen and petty traders, and *masākīn duᶜafāʾ / ḍaᶜfā*, workers in clay, see my "Social Stratification in Arabia," in *The Islamic City: Selected Papers from the Colloquium Held at the Middle East Centre, Faculty of Oriental Studies Cambridge from 19 to 23 July 1976* (Paris, 1980), p. 130. Sayf b. Ḥusayn al-Quᶜayṭī, *Al-amthāl wa-ʾl-aqwāl al-Ḥaḍramiyyah* (unpublished MS in Haydarabad, Deccan), cites a proverb, "*lā tusāyir man silāḥ-uh ṣamīl-uh*," "do not travel with a companion whose weapon is his club." This is because being unarmed, he will not be able to join in defense against an attack on the party.

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The rights to protection of palm-groves became known as *shāʾim wa-lāʾim*[16] or simply as *shāʾim*. The *shāʾim* developed into a sort of investment or stock of which one person could dispose by sale to another, and, in recent times at least, the palm-proprietor could buy back the *shāʾim* on his own land and install his own warden to guard his crop without paying the tribes for protection. The British Resident, or perhaps more exactly the local governments under his advice, took action to reduce the *shāʾim* on all produce to 5 percent, and the new measure was enforced. The tribesmen had in the past, as we have seen, taken very much more than 5 percent, and it seems that the Kathīrī Sultans were powerless to stop them. When the *shāʾim* was restricted to 5 percent, the measure was naturally not altogether pleasing to those who had money in it.

There seem to have been three stages at which the palm proprietors had to suffer the depredations of the palm warden.

1. About the time the covers are placed on the date clusters when they are just beginning to redden and are known as *faḍaḥ*, and later at the *munāṣif*[17] stage, dates are taken by the Bedouin.[18]
2. When the palm frond (*saʿf*)[19] dries and changes color the Bedouin come and cut it.
3. The Bedouin send to the owners to tell them it is time to cut the date crop (*kharīf*) and take their portion of what is cut.

These three despoilations are described in Sayyid Ṭāhir's *maqāmah*[20] translated below, but he also alludes to other devices by which they rob the palms. The Bedouin take anything that falls to the ground; they shake the dates at the green (*bisr*) stage and collect anything that falls, for, unpalatable as these may seem to a Westerner at the earlier stages, the diet of the Ḥaḍramī is so monotonous that even *bisr* is welcome. Often the Bedouin take more than the share of the crop due to them by custom or contract. For instance, they will perhaps take a cover (*khubrah*) with its content of dates with the words, "*Baghayt ghadā l-ummī/li-khāltī*," "I want 'elevenses' for my mother/mother-in-law."[21] This bare-faced theft is covered by the decent term of *ghadā* (lunch), which is often supplied by employers to employees as a part of their wage. In this way sometimes as much as nine-tenths or nearly all of the crop is lost to the palm proprietor. Indeed some lost so much of their crop that they did not even bother to harvest it.

In the Wādī Dawʿan, from which hail many wealthy Ḥaḍramī merchants settled in foreign parts, palms were purchased for what seem purely prestige or sentimental reasons. In January-February 1948, for example, at al-Maṣnaʿah, palms are recorded as selling sometimes at 3,000 rupees and bringing in a harvest of dates worth 13, 15, or

16 Cf. my "Two Tribal Law Cases (documents)," *JRAS*, April 1951, pp. 38, 44: *shāyim wa-lāyim* is that which touches a man's honor. Muḥammad b. Hāshim, *Tārīkh al-dawlat al-Kathīriyyah* (Cairo, 1367/1948), p. 134, says, discussing *shirāḥah*: "The custom (*ʿurf*) was current that each tribe had the right of protection of the properties (*amwāl*) which their area covered and the protection was called in their *ʿurf*, *shirāḥah*, and the area of (their) influence *shāyim*, and the owners had never any right to transfer the *shirāḥah* to whomsoever they wish." Cf. ibid., p. 106, for a raid by a Shanfarī group on the *masāriḥ* of Al-Tamīm at Dammūn and on cattle and donkeys going out to work (*sawāriḥ*) in the fields.

17 *Munāṣif* dates have one side ripe, the other half-ripe, deep brown and bright yellow.

18 Bedouin simply means tribesfolk, not nomads.

19 *Saʿf* is used for fuel, basket making, and other purposes.

20 See again my *Prose and Poetry*, pp. 164 ff., Arabic text, secs. 16-24.

21 Lit., maternal aunt, used euphemistically for mother-in-law.

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20 rupees; and from this the cost of maintenance had to be deducted. Dung (probably from the privies) cost a quarter rupee per *jibl* (plur. *jubūl*), "pannier," two of which make a donkey load. A letter dated 16/xii/1365 (11/xi/1946) to the Quᶜayṭī Government from Khuraybah in Dawᶜan concerning the water-channels and protected date palms (*sawāqī wa-mashāriḥ*) of the village complains that people are still paying the taxes they used to pay in "the period of oppression (*ᶜaṣr al-ẓulm*)" (i.e., prior to the reforms sponsored with the Ḥaḍramī states by the British Residency) for which they see no justification except that those who collect the taxes have succeeded to them from their fathers. The writer cites the case of the villagers of al-Ribāṭ nearby who used to make payments to the Marāshidah (sing. Murshidī), Qatham/Qitham, and Sumūḥ (sing Sawmaḥī) Bedouin, all of the Saybān tribe, but who have now recovered their rights. He says that the Āl al-ᶜAmūdī Mashāyikh, the people of Dayjūr, have withdrawn from such (things) as this (*takhallaw ᶜan mithl hādhā*) at the instance of the Nāᵓib so they cannot see why the Khāmiᶜah and Marāshidah tribesmen should be exempted from giving up taxes they exact. "It is not justice that we should pay three taxes (*ḍarībah*), one to the Khāmiᶜah and Marāshidah, one to the Government (*Dawlah*), and one to the palm wardens of the peasants (*shurrāḥ al-ḥaḍar*) who watch, to look after our property (*amwāl*, "palm groves"). The writers, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Bā Rās (who signs it) and all the palm proprietors (*mawwālah*) of al-Khuraybah, ask for protection against this payment to the Marāshidah and Khāmiᶜah."

The author of the *maqāmah* which is the subject of this article, al-Sayyid Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn b. Ṭāhir al-ᶜAlawī, was born in Tarīm in 1184/1770 and died in 1241/1825-26 at Masīlat Āl Shaykh, to which his father had moved along with his family when Sayyid Ṭāhir was twenty-four years old. Sayyid Muḥammad b. Hāshim,[22] who dwells on his biography at some length, sees in his career part of the effort of the ᶜAlawī Sayyids to set up a state (*dawlah ᶜāmmah*) and suppress disorders (*fitan*). The chiefs of Tamīm and the Āl Kathīr agreed to making him ruler as Imām, and he took the title Nāṣir al-Dīn and gave the address at the Friday Prayer girt with his sword and carrying a *bunduq*. As the ᶜAlawī Sayyids, or most of them, had given up the bearing of arms[23] for several centuries to devote themselves to religion, this was a new departure. Sayyid Ṭāhir was, however, at the same time a serious scholar whose works include responsae (*ajwibah*) to questions on *sharīᶜah*, and in a practical sense he acted to promote conciliation, but in effect arbitration (*iṣlāḥ*), between parties at variance with one another. A curious treatise of his is cited by Muḥammad b. Hāshim, *Taḥrīm al-mashṭ bi-ᵓl-tamr al-mamzūj bi-ᵓl-ward* [The prohibition of combing with dates mixed with roses], which he avers was a custom at that time.

Two neighboring sections of Tamīm, Āl Mirsāf and Āl ᶜAbd al-Shaykh, quarreled over protection of crops (*shāyim shirāḥah*) of a group called Āl Ḥamtūsh. The latter had decided to transfer the *shirāḥah* of the land they owned from Ibn ᶜAbd al-Shaykh to Āl Mirsāf, but the former objected on the grounds that Āl Ḥamtūsh were his protected persons (*rabīᶜ*), and he did not assent to his *shāyim* being withdrawn from them. Imām Ṭāhir wrote to Āl ᶜAbd al-Shaykh at Bā ᶜIṭīr supporting the rights of proprietors to act as they wished over their property. Āl ᶜAbd al-Shaykh tried to

22 Muḥammad b. Hāshim, *Tārīkh al-dawlat*, pp. 127ff.

23 See my *Saiyids of Ḥaḍramawt* (London, 1956), p. 19.

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convince Ṭāhir that Āl Ḥamtūsh were under their protection (*rabāᶜah*), and to remove the *shāṿim* was a violation of their protection and a treading (*daws*) upon their honor, which would bring disgrace (*ᶜār*)[24] and humiliation among the tribes. They ask him to take this into consideration and look at both sides "with a single eye." He replied that it was all right to have Āl Ḥamtūsh as a *rabīᶜ* to defend, "but if you protect him (*rabaᶜta-hu*) to gain power over the Sayyids and Miskīns by beating, force, abuse, reviling, and destruction of their properties, then this is a (kind) of protection to which none of the tribes of Ḥaḍramawt have resorted before you, even Yāfiᶜī or Shanfarī." (Ṭāhir was opposed to the Yāfiᶜī group.)

Ibn Yamānī, the chief (*muqaddam*) of all Āl Tamīm, entered into the case and eventually he summoned all the Tamīmī tribes to meet him at his village Qasam at Ṭāhir's instance. Ibn ᶜAbd al-Shaykh accepted his decision (*ḥukm*) on condition that he should make a critical examination of it (*ṿunāqida-hu*) with the chief of the Bā Jaray tribe of the Shanāfir.

In 1225/1810-11 and 1226/1811-12 the chief Sayyid families of Ḥaḍramawt, including the Āl ᶜAydarūs, the family with whom lay the hereditary chieftanship known as *naqābah*, the B. Shihāb, B. Sahl, ᶜAydīd, Ḥabshī, Jifrī, Āl Kāf families, and others agreed on giving him their allegiance (*mubāṿaᶜah*); the Āl Tamīm also adhered to this. They were to promote the *sharīᶜah* and were of course opposed to customary law. Nevertheless, there were further troubles between some of the Āl Tamīm and certain land-owners, and the Tamīmīs in question would not accept the decision on the issue because it was outside the customary law (*al-ᶜurf*) between the two parties. Furthermore, the notables of the tribe hung back from enforcing the decision as, on account of the treaty between them and Ṭāhir, they should have done. Eventually a meeting was arranged between the Tamīm chiefs and Ṭāhir at Masīlat Āl Shaykh and an agreement drawn up between them. It stipulated that *shirāḥah* and *biqār*[25] were not to be restricted to certain recognized people among them and that proprietors (*ahl al-amwāl*) were in charge of their properties in the matter of *shirāḥah wa-biqār* and the like, engaging whomsoever they wished for this purpose. The palm wardens (*sharaḥ*) assented to this *fatwā*.

The efforts of Sayyid Ṭāhir and the ᶜAlawī Sayyids to establish a sort of Shāfiᶜī imāmate in Ḥaḍramawt did not meet with adequate support in the country, and he eventually disengaged himself from any active participation in affairs. The Sayyids later corresponded with Muḥammad ᶜAlī Pasha of Egypt and with the Imām of the Yemen to persuade them to intervene in Ḥaḍramawt, but neither was sufficiently interested or able to do so.

It is more than likely that Sayyid Ṭāhir composed his *maqāmah* about the time of the dispute between Āl Mirsāf and Āl ᶜAbd al-Shaykh and that he intended it as

24 How greatly the protectors esteemed these rights over the palm plantations is perhaps to be seen in the poem of Bā Gharīb where he expresses his longing for Ḥaḍramawt while living abroad (quoted in my *Prose and Poetry*, p. 124):

Ḍayyaᶜtu ʾl-amwāl wa-ʾl-shāṿim
Lī fi ʾl-Masīlah wa-fī Bashᶜar.

I have lost my estates and palm protection rents Which I had in the Masīlah and Bashᶜar. Bashᶜar is a place south (*baḥrī*) of Tarīm.

25 *Biqār* is not known to me, but *baqara* means "labourer la terre" (C. Landberg, *Glossaire daṭînois* [Leiden, 1920-42]), and I can only suggest that it may have something to do with ploughing by the *baqqārah* or "cattle-men."

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propaganda against the abuses by the tribes of their position as protectors of the palm proprietors, among whom of course many of the Sayyid class would be numbered. He displays great literary skill in describing and delineating the habits and haughty, overbearing manner of the tribesman to the non-arms-bearing groups whom he considers *farth*, "dung," as opposed to *dam*, "blood," i.e., the tribal element.

16 This Maqāmah Concerns Those Engaged in "Palm-Protection" in Ḥaḍramawt

Composed by the Blessed Sayyid[26] Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn b. Ṭāhir al-ʿAlawī (God aid us through his virtue, Amen)

Praise to God, Lord of the Universe. One of his[27] dicta, God receive and rest (his soul), is a pronouncement of his. "Palm-Protection" comes into the category of basically reprehensible actions, devoid of goodness or grace, (characterized by) unscrupulousness, associated with oppression and insolence, and accompanied with harshness and haughtiness.

Viz., the Tribes of Ḥaḍramawt, for whom Death would be seemlier than Life, have obtained mastery over "the property of the people by corruption" (Qurʾān 4:159, 9:35),[28] gaining possession thereof without any right or analogy. They have not the least semblance (of a claim) to it, be it much or little, nor have they any proprietary rights, not even a grain or date-stone pellicle.[29] The proprietors never hire them for the palms at all, nor for one instant did they permit them to enter their property, neither did they ask them to watch (over the palms) or for help. But the palm warden considers that he has more right to the palms than their true owner, saying, "This is mine," without respect for the Noble Creator and his Creation;[30] for "Satan has made their works seem good unto them" (Qurʾān 8:49), making their natures fair in their own eyes, and their actions seem excellent to them.

You find that they will not listen to advice nor turn from what they have resolved, "for when it is said unto them 'do ye not evil in the land!' they say, 'we do naught but what is good.' 'Verily they are the evil-doers but they perceive it not' (Qurʾān 2:11). 'God destroy them, how they are made to lie!' " (Qurʾān 9:30).

17 They persist in wrongdoing, and inflict great loss on (God's) servants. "When it is said unto him,[31] 'Fear God,' pride[32] makes him sin. Gehenna shall suffice him, and a bad bed that is" (Qurʾān 2:202). Yet, withal, would only that they did not steal, and not take an unreasonable wage,[33] or that they would be satisfied and content with what the palm-proprietor leaves (aside) for them, treating the

26 *Al-ḥabīb al-barakah*, a quite unusual form of epithet even for a Sayyid still living.

27 The author, Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn.

28 These Qurʾān passages both contain references to the Jews, and one refers to the monks—this seems intended to insult the tribes. *Māl*, "property," means palm groves.

29 I.e., not a jot or tittle. Cf. al-Wāqidī, *Al-maghāzī*, ed. Marsden Jones (London, 1966), vol. 2, p. 732: give alms, "*wa-law bi-shiqq tamrat-in*."

30 I.e., mankind.

31 The palm warden.

32 The Qurʾān refers to tribal pride, an apt quotation here.

33 Palm wardens usually took much more than the fifth customarily paid them under agreements they had forced on the proprietors.

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proprietors with politeness and (due) humility. "Nay, on the contrary! What they were doing (sinfully) has won sway over their hearts!" (Qurʾān 83:14).

When one of them wishes to go out to walk around the palm-plantations under his protection, you will find that he tricks himself out in all his finery and girds up his kilt,[34] putting his right foot up against his left leg and leaning on a stick,[35] winding a sash around his waist, binding a black wool cord[36] (around his turban), drawing it tight, and tying a (black) wool thread around his wrists and calves, puffing himself out boastfully, ruffling it proudly, swaggering, and strutting.[37] Whenever he has walked a little way, he clears his throat roundly[38] and blows out his nose with his fingers,[39] imagining that he has succeeded well or that he possesses the kingdom of Chosroes and Caesar. He never passes by a peasant[40] but he bullies him, nor a piece of palm-branch without breaking it off, nor a palm owner, but he scolds him abusively, saying, "what are you up to—putting the covers on the ripening date-clusters[41] or cutting before you come to ask me. At the moment God does not will[42] that you should cut (them)!"[43]

(So) he pours forth a torrent of bad language and unpleasant abuse, while the palm owner follows in his steps behind him, trying to ingratiate himself with the tribesmen and beseeching favors.[44] The palm warden remains (the while) frowning, silent, and full of wrath, (merely) putting his hand out (to say, "Be off with you!"), and walking away with loud threats. The life of the palm owner is spent

34 The tribesman wears his kilt or waist-wrapper quite short, whereas Sayyids carefully observe the injunction to cover the knee. The *fūṭah* is girt up so that the tribesman can move quickly to stop anyone cutting the dates. When wearing the *fūṭah* short, one is said to be *mutakashshil*; when wearing it long with the foot trailing on the ground, one is *mutabarrij* (the latter is also applied to a woman who decks herself out). A knot tied at the top of it about the waist to hold some small object is called *ʿaṣb*.

35 This is common in Ḥaḍramawt, mostly among the Bedu and is regarded here as a sign of insolent power.

36 A cord (*ḥabl*) is wound round the turban to be ready for action, it is said, and to serve as protection against blows. The *ḍafīr* cord is tied around the wrists, under the knees, or around the ankles. Raḥayyam maintained this is done for reasons of pride, but I have seen such a thread on a Tarīm Sayyid's wrist, and have been told that it is worn if one has a pain (*sāniq*) in the leg or arm—in the latter case it should be above the elbow or wrist. An Arab of al-Bayḍā told me it is worn around the calf because it holds the flesh compactly together and keeps it from wobbling (though these people are spare enough), preventing soreness and stiffness. In some parts tribesmen wear a row of these threads around the top of the calf linked into silver buckles called *ḥubūs* (sing. *ḥibs*).

37 A true if satirical description of the tribesman's behavior.

38 To indicate disapproval one clears one's throat and says, "*ḥam ḥam*," among many tribes, thus giving warning of a matter touching one's honor. At a Sayyid house in Qaydūn I recall the teasing of an ʿAmūdī shaykh who had taken a young girl newly to wife, but for whom, it seemed, he had not proved altogether adequate—*tishtakī minnuh, yādhī-hā*. His Qaydūn friends kept his temper simmering while he tried to induce the Sayyid to take him seriously enough to provide a *duwā* to meet his condition. When he felt the fun was touching too nearly on his honor he would clear his throat in this way, moving his hand to his dagger to indicate things had gone too far. Cf. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad* (Cairo, A.H. 1313), vol. 1, p. 381, *tanaḥnaḥa wa-bazaqa*. If in the *ṭahārah* and another attempts to enter, the occupant clears his throat in this pointed way!

39 In the more tribal districts Arabs blow the nose with the fingers and shake the product out of the window or under the palm-mat on the floor. This was not considered unmannerly in Wāḥidī country, but I never saw it done in Sayyid houses in Tarīm or Saywūn. In the context here it is insulting.

40 *Miskīn ḍaʿfā*. See n. 15 above and also my "South Arabia," in C. A. O. van Nieuwenhuijze, *Commoners, Climbers and Notables* (Leiden, 1977), p. 232.

41 Open basket-work covers are placed over the date clusters to keep the birds off them.

42 Lit., "has not written."

43 With the curved toothed *sharīm* sickle.

44 Such as to be allowed to cut his own dates!

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in attendance on the palm warden, in coaxing and flattering him, even through his children and women, servants and slaves—whose favor he tries to win by little gifts,[45] stories, and all sorts of amusing tales, so that they may perhaps laugh to him or smile in his face, though they scoff and deride him (all the while). This is if they are pleased and mollified by him.[46]

Some of the palm wardens make a show of scrupling to avoid forbidden things and of pretensions to righteousness, but they are not aware that they are eating of forbidden foods[47] and are deluded thereby. Say to them, "so ask those who have
18 Books of Monition[48] if you do not know" (Qurʾān 16:43). You see them carrying rosaries,[49] praising God and "reckoning that they are guided aright" (Qurʾān 7:29). "They try to deceive God and those who have believed, but they deceive only themselves and are not aware" (Qurʾān 2:9). Man, hast thou ever heard of so reprehensible an action as this, or have thine eyes ever beheld such an evident (sin)?

How many vicious practices[50] there are in "Palm-Protection," and what a volume of deadly sins lies therein, engulfing bodies and souls and angering Him who knoweth all mysteries, such as the abominable brokerage fee[51] involving shame[52] and infamy. Viz., whoever it be who sells palms belonging to or owned by him, the palm wardens take part of the vendor's money and a part from the purchaser which they (must) pay immediately. It might seem as if he (the tribesman) had sold the most expensive commodities[53]; yet he concluded no contract between the two parties nor exerted himself in any way,[54] nor went to any trouble. Then he takes over the palms at once and gives the purchaser a taste of the harshest oppression, mulcting (him) of the larger share in everything,[55] while condescending to give to the purchaser as if he were conferring the greatest of favors upon him, though he has no responsibility for the cultivation[56] or any of the expenses.[57] Notwithstanding this he says, "why don't you look to the cultivation of the palms and see to them? Look to them[58] before they wither! Attend to them before they die!" because he knows if they die the loss will be his,

45 Such as fish, sugar, a *thawb*, etc.

46 Through the gifts given by the *ṭabīn*, or "palm-owner," to the tribesman and his retainers.

47 Cf. Qurʾān 5:45, 65, 66.

48 So Rodwell, after al-Bayḍāwī.

49 This may refer specifically to the Tamīmīs who carry rosaries wound around their dagger-hilts, but one sees this also in other parts of South Arabia. For rosaries of *yusr*, cf. Ibn al-ʿAydarūs, *Al-nūr al-sāfir* (Baghdad, 1934), p. 272, a sort of blackish coral; it is found among other places off the coast of the Wāḥidī sultanate.

50 *ʿAyb* can mean "something that brings shame upon (one)." One says, "*ʿAyb ʿalayk taqūl hākadhā*," "it is shameful of you to say so." To stop a child or adult from an unseemly action one says, "*ʿAyb*!"

51 If you purchase, for example, 400 palms, you give the *qabīlī*, tribesman, two and a half or even as many as five palms. The vendor does the same, and until such payment is made, the *qabīlī* will not permit the new owner to enter into possession. The broker's commission is of course well established all over southern Arabia, but the author complains that this is an exaction, not payment in return for a service. The actual transfer fee is given by Van den Berg, *Ḥadhramout*, p. 79, as 5 percent.

52 *ʿĀr* has much the same sense as *ʿayb*.

53 Because the fee is excessive in proportion to the value of the goods sold.

54 Unlike the broker (*dallāl*) who works for his money.

55 According to my informant, in the harvest of fruit and grain. In my unpublished collection of documents from the Thibī *ḥawṭah* (sacred enclave), lists of these imposts are to be found.

56 Such as digging round the roots of the palm, irrigation, etc.

57 Such as the wage of the *khaddām al-nakhl*.

58 To irrigate them.

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for their fruit brings him profit. The palm owner is compelled[59] always to work for others, exposed to loss, humiliation, misery, regret, chagrin, and sufferance, poverty, and distress.

What an amazing thing it is that anyone should sell free men in return for serfs,[60] and in lieu of a tranquil heart and ease one should take quarreling and altercation, abandoning the pleasures of solitude to mix with Hypocrites. The respectable man is he who would remain in the house[61] without coming into contact with those blackguards.[62] Fie upon property which humiliates Man to this degree; perish worldly chattels which bring him to this pass!

19 These words I say extempore, hoping only that one of them may hear them with attention, humility, and submission, so that he may repent of his sin and return to his Lord, God have mercy upon him who shows my faults and points out my sins to me. So give warning, for warning profits the Believers, and the mercy of God is near unto the righteous. God loveth those who repent and cherisheth those who avoid sin. But penitence has certain provisions and a fixed rule; it is no mere clacking of the tongue[63] or wagging of the head and forefinger. God watcheth over the hearts (of men), and each must soon meet Him face to face. So let him hear what the Lord of Mankind[64] has said concerning forbidden things.

He (God bless him) said, "God has an angel over Jerusalem who proclaims each night, 'whosoever consumes forbidden things, from him God will not accept intercession or a propitiary gift, i.e., neither a super-rogatory nor an obligatory action.'"[65] He (God bless him) said, "whosoever buys a piece of cloth for ten dirhams, and a single dirham of the price is a forbidden thing,[66] his prayer God will not accept so long as he continues thus." He (God bless him) said, "any flesh which has grown from forbidden things, Hell best befits it."[67] He (God bless him) said, "he who cares not whence he acquires his money, God will not care whence he makes him enter Hell."[68] How much there is in the verses (of the Qurʾān) and

59 The Arabic word has the sense of *corvée* (*sukhrī*), common throughout the Middle East at one time and which still existed in the Yemen probably up to the 1962 coup d'état.

60 *Ariqqāʾ*, properly "slaves."

61 It would be better to sell your palms and not endure so many insults and so much oppression, along with the labor of tending the palms for so little profit, as do many of the religious Sayyids who have retired from the world.

62 In Sayyid writings the word *ashrār*, "blackguards," is regularly used of the Arab tribal groups which held Wādī Ḥaḍramawt at their mercy, exacting the maximum from the land-owners and peasants. The Sayyids and other Ḥaḍramīs of religion are known by them as *al-Akhyār*. Cf. ʿAydarūs b. ʾUmar al-Ḥabshī, *ʿIqd al-yawāqīt al-jawhariyyah* (Cairo, A.H. 1317), pp. 17-18. The Abyssinians in pre-Islamic times are called al-Ashrār, *li-mā aḥdathū fī ʾl-Yaman min al-ʿayth wa-ʾl-fisād wa-ikhrāb al-bilād.*

63 This seems to mean the clicking of the tongue on the palate, a sound of assent in Ḥaḍramawt when accompanied by tossing back the head, but of dissent if the head be shaken from side to side. Another gesture is lifting the right hand palm outward shaking it from side to side to indicate the negative, while to put the hand to the brow denotes assent.

64 The Prophet.

65 For *ṣarf wa-ʿadl*, see my article "The *Sunnah Jāmiʿah* . . . Documents Comprised in the So-Called 'Constitution of Medina'," *BSOAS* 41 (1978): sec. i, p. 24. The tradition does not seem to be in Wensinck's *Concordance*.

66 Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 1, p. 346: *man ishtarā thawb-an bi-dirham-in wa-fī-hi dirham-un ḥarām-un*, etc. By "forbidden thing," goods unlawfully acquired are meant.

67 Ibid., pp. 321, 399: *lā yadkhulu ʾl-Jannah man nabata laḥmu-hu min suḥt-in.*

68 Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Buyūʿ*, vol. 7, though not verbatim as quoted here.

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Traditions which confirms this; how many an admonition do they contain—which only he who listens and testifies can comprehend. Whosoever maintains that "palm-protection" is lawful, without (his) having been hired by the palm owner—a genuine transaction without question, has joined the band of the Erring. His link with (the faith of) Islam has vanished into shame and pain, retribution and punishment, fetter and chain, because he has transgressed the Law of Almighty God and disobeyed the command of the Apostle when he said "Allah, Allah![69] Let God's servants avoid this corruptness."[70] For God knows
20 "the deceitful eye and what (men's) breasts conceal" (Qurʾān 40:19). "So let not the present life delude you, nor let the Deceiver delude you concerning God" (Qurʾān 31:33). For soon you will perish, and you shall harvest what you sow, and "you shall be rewarded only (according to) what you do" (Qurʾān 52:16). "And they who have acted unjustly shall learn how they shall be overturned" (Qurʾān 26:227). If one of them should say that they do not listen to good counsel, nor follow the truth, nor take warning from admonitions, I shall say, "for (our own) excuse with your Lord, and it may be that they will act rightly" (Qurʾān 7:163).[71] "To my Lord alone shall their account be rendered, if you but know" (Qurʾān 26:113). "Far is your Lord, the Lord of Glory, from what they attribute (to him)" (Qurʾān 37:180). Bless the Apostles, and praise to God, Lord of the Universe.

Chapter on
the Stage When the Dates First Begin to Redden[72]

And (the season when) the palm wardens take their ease, (the season of) slaughtering and supping,[73] of setting the covers on the date-clusters, and of cutting, of annoyance and intimidation, and concerning what they take by trickery and theft from the palm owner.

Some of this I have already explained, and I beseech God for strength to tell of their evil ways and what they do, saying, "God aid me to arrive at the truth" by

69 Allāh Allāh, fear God in respect of such a thing (Lane).

70 This tradition does not seem to be in Wensinck.

71 The Qurʾānic context has an apologia for the Prophet's seeming to waste time on admonishing hardened sinners—so also Sayyid Ṭāhir justifies his admonishing the tribes engaged in "palm protection."

72 Or turn yellow, depending on the variety in question. Specific technical terms distinguish stages in the ripening of the date. In ʿUman, S. B. Miles, *Countries and Tribes of the Persian Gulf* (London, 1919), vol. 2, p. 396, records nine stages, but they do not correspond exactly to the Ḥaḍramī terms which are: a) *bisr*, green; b) *faḍaḥ*, turning red or yellow; c) *qarʿ*, half red and ripe (vb., *qarraʿ*, to become *qarʿ*), syn. *munāṣif*; d) *maḥū*, syn. *ruṭab*, described as *manfūkh*, swollen; ripe; and black, yellow, or red, according to the variety; e) *bāligh*, syn. *maftūl*, dry and wrinkled; f) *khaṭiʿ*, rotten dates, not eaten, sour, gone bad. A term given me elsewhere was *maḥil*, *bisr*, which becomes partly black but is not *maḥū*. Some of these terms seem unknown to the lexicons.

73 Lit., "ladling out" of soup, always made from a slaughtered animal and drunk from the common bowl after eating the meat. It is at the time of the early reddening that the tribes come from their houses to the Masīlah and make their *ʿarīsh* of palm-branches in which they stay to protect the ripening date-crop. There are even small *dār*s in the fields outside al-Hajarayn in which the palm wardens used to stay at the time of the *kharīf*, but by 1947 all this had ceased. The tribesmen cut the *faḍaḥ* dates, leave them exposed to the sun, then shake them into the cone-shaped basket known as *maqsham* or an ordinary palm-leaf basket to make them ripen quickly, then sell them and with the proceeds buy a sheep to kill and eat.

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aiding you and me with the means to repent, for He is generous and freely giving. I seek refuge in God from Satan the accursed—in the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful, seeking to reach the Mighty King through the Holy Prophet, the Sacred House, Zamzam, and al-Ḥaṭīm.[74] (I beseech God) that He remove this vile wicked thing, a reprehensible affair under no restraint or limitation.

The first thing by which they begin[75] and upon which they contract and concur, (is that) when the reddening dates begin to show on the palm-trees, impudence
21 and laughter begin to appear in them, and a great deal of babble and abuse. They let loose their women and children, saying to them, "deal roughly with the peasants,[76] block up the paths with thorns.[77] Don't cover up the stranger if he falls by the wayside;[78] but if it is a man of arms[79] speak to him tactfully. Eat all you can which is still without covers before those greedy[80] men who give no charity[81] of it, nor entertain the poor from God's portion, and who do not (properly) understand the worth of what God has preserved and protected for them." The (palm wardens) often miscall[82] the palm owner with far worse words than these, insulting his honor in front of rascals and beggars, never thinking that for this there will be a reckoning (with God some day), nor do they realize the inevitability of catastrophe, stopping, and quakings of the earth.

When the palm owner comes to put on the covers,[83] he sends to them, great and small, politely consulting them, with the words, "we are going to put on the covers, if you are not too busy, but otherwise we shall go away."[84] After an hour[85] they answer the palm warden, saying, "you think that we're keen to leave it.[86] We

74 Al-Ḥaṭīm is merely employed for the rhyme, a well a few feet west of the Meccan Kaʿbah.

75 This word means also "to undertake." This opening sentence is a parody of the style of tribal documents and their rather pompous phrasing. For example, one of the Thibī agreements reads, "the noble Sayyid ʿAlawī b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlawī al-ʿAydarūs and the Headmen of the Āl Shaybān have agreed, undertaken, resolved, and decided by their honor. . . ."

76 "Beggars" might be a better rendering of *masākīn*, since at the time of the *faḍaḥ* stage beggars come to collect fallen dates, but the palm wardens drive them away. In this connection, Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. al-Murtaḍā, *Al-baḥr al-zakhkhār* (Cairo, 1366/1947-1368/1949), vol. 4, p. 284, states that if it is the custom of owners of fallen fruits (*sawāqiṭ al-thimār*) to make them free, it is permissible to take them since custom (*ʿurf*) has an influence on the like of this. So in Zaydī Yemen that was evidently the practice.

77 *Salam*, acacia, thorn would be laid down to keep people out of the palm-groves.

78 Scold a beggar or bedouin if he takes the dates. Some less severe palm wardens would only warn pilferers.

79 I.e., a tribesman, who is not to be treated in this insulting fashion. Care must be taken to create no incident (*bādī*) that might lead to a feud, but the tribesman counts all others, Sayyids included, as *farth*, "dung," the slaying of whom will not give rise to a feud between tribesmen.

80 By "greedy," perhaps to be rendered as "envious," the palm proprietors are intended.

81 *Zakāt*.

82 As in other Arab countries expressions of abuse might be, "*umm-ak*," "your mother"; "*aysh abūk bā*," "what does your father want?"; "*aysh umm-ak batt-uh*" (for *baghat-uh*), "what does your mother want"? See also my article "Sex, Birth and Circumcision," in Adolf Leidlmar, *Hermann von Wissmann Festschrift* (Tübingen, 1962), p. 194.

83 The covers are made mostly in Madūdah and in 1954 cost 40 East African cents each. They are sold in batches of 40 (*qarn*), one packed on top of another to form a bundle. Brokerage is 40 cents per *qarn*.

84 Without putting the covers onto the date-clusters.

85 The palm warden pauses a while without giving an answer, out of tribal haughtiness and contempt for the palm owner.

86 The palm warden means that this is not the case as he cannot offer the excuse to any person who comes to ask him for a few dates that the covers have now been put on them and they cannot be touched.

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had, as a matter of fact, thought of sending for you before today because this year the date-crop is a very little only,[87] and if it is left (without covers) much blame will fall on us."[88] (In such ways) do they make out that the date-crop is poor, belittling and despising it.[89] They add that it requires watering and that the fruit is dropping off,[90] making little (of it) so that the reckoning of what they are going to take to bring away and eat will tally. The palm owner says to his laborers, "let one man go to cover each palm while I stay here to see which of you is getting on with the job."

When the laborer goes (to do so), they (the palm wardens) say to him, "Keep off our 'bounty'," [91] stopping him, so the peasant[92] says, "point out exactly what is yours." "Each small child-palm,"[93] says the palm warden, "leave it alone, and
22 take care you don't go near it!" "Whatever you say," answer (the laborers), "in whatever you mark out."

But, after all that, the (tribes-people) go up to the father-palm[94] and pull off its fruit. Their women and children bear down (on the dates) stripping them off with their fingers,[95] and their friends too, close and distant relatives, come racing up to it, while all the owner can do is to look on and stay sitting still, all (the palm owners) preoccupied and silent together, as the (tribes-people) quarrel and snatch (anything they can get) from each other. When all this is done, the palm owner can scarcely believe that (the trouble) is over, for he gets but little out of the date-crop, and the cares and vexations he suffers are without number. O God, make haste to bring retribution to the palm wardens, by the right/truth of Muḥammad, Lord of Mankind. There is no gainsaying that most of it falls to the share of the palm wardens, in the way of (what is taken) at the ripening of the fruit in "bounties," or fraudulent practices. Yet despite this they say, "the palm owner has

87 The rhymed terms *shawm* and *lawm* at once recall to the Ḥaḍram so Ḥaḍramī the phrase *shāʾim wa-lāʾim*, rights over palm-plantations of the palm warden. See "Two Tribal Law Cases," I, 44-45. But *shawm* here means "very little"; cf. classical *shuʾm*.

88 As long as the dates are left without covers many people will come to ask for gifts of them, and if the palm warden refuses them he will be stigmatized as *bakhīl*, "mean," and his honor will suffer.

89 The palm warden represents the crop as meager because he has already taken some and wants to cover up the deficiency.

90 They imply that the owners have not seen to the oiling of the date clusters with castor oil earlier in the year to prevent the dates dropping prematurely.

91 The *ṭarḥah* is a handful or two of dates given to a beggar who asks for them as one is climbing the palm to pluck one's crop. This is never refused, but the *khaddām al-nakhl* also cheats his master and gives the date-bounty to his relatives so that, indeed, one way or another, the beggar may receive more than the owner. Here the palm warden is telling the cultivator not to give the "bounty" to his own women and children.

92 Arabic *ḍaᶜīf*, who is called *jaᶜīl*, laborer.

93 Each small palm standing by itself is called *walad*, child. The following are the various types of growth: *khalᶜah*, plur. *khilāᶜah*, small young palm which has reached the stage of bearing fruit; *manqar*, a tall, single-stemmed palm; *qarīn*, a palm with two trunks stemming from a single root; *dawwārah*, a palm with three or more trunks; *mallah*, a large palm like the *dawwārah* but planted near a well. For the term *khāliᶜ* and the saint known as Khāliᶜ Qasam, see my article "Hūd and Other South Arabian Prophets," *Le Muséon* 47 (1954): 157. A *baqlah/bajlah* is a self-sown palm, the opposite of *khalᶜah*. See also my article "Some Irrigation Systems in Ḥaḍramawt," *BSOAS* 27 (1964): sec. 1, p. 66. The Ḥaḍramī says: "*Lī qid-ak bā takhlaᶜ tibāq lābāh*," "If you are going to plant, look at its (the palm's) fathers" (*tabāqā li*, to look, examine, etc.). This is also used metaphorically of human beings.

94 The *ab* or "father" is a tall palm. The varieties of palm are divided, arbitrarily it seems, into male and female—that is apart from the true male palm used to fecundate the date-bearing palms. A "male" variety such as *Zār* or *Madīnī* is known as *ab*; the "female" variety such as *Ḥamrā* and *Hijrī* is known as *umm*, and one speaks of *al-umm* and *al-abū*.

95 *Kharīṭ*, pulling the date-stalk through two fingers to strip off the fruit, not pulling off each date separately.

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left us nothing[96] (though, in point of fact, he set neither locks or keys upon it),[97] but we shall take away what we want without any bother (from him)."

When the date-crop ripens and becomes "medium-ripe"[98] they bring baskets and bags[99] to it and begin carrying it off in goat-skin bags[100] or plaids.[101] After they have got all they wish and think they have done well, and profitably they return to their places to meet, agree and undertake,[102] to conceal what has taken place. For about ten days or a week after this they stay resting, killing fat sheep in great luxury and ease, as if they had upheld the Faith and the sanctions of Islam! Nay! On the contrary, they are demolishing all its very Pillars, treading the paths of Satan, little thinking they are on their way to Hell-Fire—God defend us from the same, deliver us and you (also) from abiding therein and make us safe from such fears and tribulation.

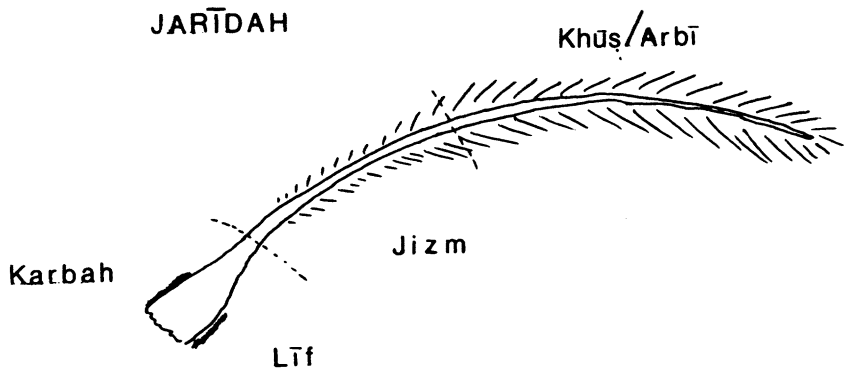

FIG. 1.—*Jarīdah*, palm spathe; *karbah*, pl. *karab*, butt or stub of palm branch; *līf*, palm fiber used for ropes or for kindling (*rushun*; *jizm*, pl. *juzūm*, or *quṣm*, thorns used to dry meat upon or for making awnings (*shubbak*) for windows (now curtains are used); *khūṣ*, palm leaf, also known as *arbī* (no plural) and used when dry for kindling (*rushun*)

96 This statement is made to counter any objections the palm owner may raise.

97 The peasant's viewpoint is expressed in the *rajaz* (See my *Prose and Poetry*, text 166, no. 80):

I wish all land-lords (*ṭabānah*) fever and disease,
For four years long not carrying their keys.

98 *Muntaṣif* = *munāṣif*.

99 The *maghdafah* is anything carried over the shoulder like a sack, so it might be a cloth used to wrap up and carry the dates.

100 A whole goat-skin used as a bag, carried over the shoulder, as well described in C. Landberg, *Etudes sur les dialectes de l'Arabe méridionale*, vol. I, *Ḥaḍramoût* (Leiden, 1901-1913), p. 257. I have the impression it is more used by tribes than peasants.

101 The *malḥafah* is a black indigo-dyed fringed cotton cloth which the Bedu carry on either shoulder as they feel inclined; it may be draped over both shoulders or used as a waistband. My informant said it was 7 by 3 *dhirāᶜ* and Baḥraq, *Nubdhat*, p. 6, gives the size as 7 by 4 *dhirāᶜ* which is also exactly what it is today. Baḥraq was writing in al-Shiḥr, a famous weaving center. Cf. Landberg, *Ḥaḍramoût*, p. 709.

102 The author again parodies the style of tribal documents. By "undertake," he means the Bedouin gesture of drawing the index finger down the brow and nose, with the words, "*shallayt bi-wijhī an afᶜal*," "I undertake by my honor (face) to do." Cf. n. 74 above.

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Then when these days have passed by and they have engaged submissive workmen, they cut down all the yellowing palm-leaf, stalk and stem,[103] may God cause them to perish, fearing not the punishment of the Angel[104] who knows all, without respect for shame or blame or flame, as if indeed, they had never entered
23 into the Faith of Islam and knew not the taste of Death.[105]

After they have committed these abominable deeds and unseemly actions,[106] taking in their grasp a formidable handful of sins and misdemeanors, they send heralds to the palm owners saying, "come (here), for the date-crop is ripe and this Ramaḍān month, wherein lieth profitable merchandise,[107] has come upon us unexpectedly. In it we wish to be free[108] to devote ourselves to acts of worship and the telling of beads."

So up come the palm owners at once because if they were to tarry punishment would be meted out to them on that account. When they come to the palms and set about cutting, up come the tribal headmen to them with swaggering gait and say, "why do you not send to the palm warden to let him know? Hold your hands until you send (for him)."

In this way is the palm owner kept back from his palms, waiting to see how his affairs will turn out, apprehensive of the vexations and insult that he will encounter. After a short while the palm warden arrives like a fiend, keeping an eye (on the people at the palms) and grumbling till he comes up to them, scolding (all the time). The palm owner gets up, makes excuses to him, humbly begging of him and kneeling on the ground in front of him, but the palm warden is in a temper, shouting abuse, and waving his hands. After a while the people[109] there go to him and ask him to let them cut, (declaring) that if they have erred, they acknowledge (their fault). After a great to-do and quarreling, accompanied by volleys of abuse and rowdiness, he does give them permission, but the palm owner is humiliated and treated with contempt.

However, they get up and cut what they manage to get, saying nothing as though they were dumb (animals) unable to speak, or blind and unable to see. Each laborer amongst them is followed by a woman and child with basket,

103 The different parts of the palm branch are distinguished by special names. The whole is known as *jarīdah*. The *karbah* (plur., *karab*) is the broad base or butt of the branch. Around it is fiber (*līf*) used for kindling (*rushun*). This narrows and the leaves begin to appear in the form of small spikes, this portion being known as *jizm* (plur., *juzūm*) but also as *quṣm* (plur., *aqṣām*), probably basically both the same word. The *jizm* was used for sun-drying pieces of meat and was also at one time used for bars (*shubhbāk*) for windows where now curtains are employed. The upper part of the branch with long leaves (*khūṣ*, sing., *khūṣah*) is called *arbī* (no plur.) and is used dry as *rushun* with the effect of producing almost instantaneous heat when desired, for instance, to boil water in a kitchen.

104 Perhaps *malik*, "king," i.e., God, should be read for the *malak*, "angel," of my informant.

105 An allusion to such Qur'ān verses as *sūrah* 3:185, etc.

106 The text here is perhaps a little dubious.

107 Reminiscent of the Qur'ān. The merchandise is God's reward for acts of devotion such as the Fast.

108 From the duties of palm protection.

109 My informant said these would be beggars and other palm wardens acting as intercessors for them. It seems, however, that the palm owners and their laborers are meant.

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pannier, and cone-shaped straw hat.[110] Whenever any dates fall they pick them up quickly, but if a cover falls they throw it aside with derision.[111]

24 When they have finished cutting and picking the dates off the stalk into the cover, (accompanied by) the hard treatment (to which they are exposed) the chief palm warden gets up and comes to them. Leaning on his stick he blows out his nose and clears his throat. Then he says, "divide and set aside the *zakāt*-alms and bring it to me to distribute amongst the people without contention (from them)." Nor can they possibly disobey any advice of his. He then takes it like a mad bull,[112] distributing it in inappropriate quarters without referring to anyone for advice.[113] He singles out his relatives, allies, friends, servants, and favorites to be its recipients, without fear or regard to the condign punishment and retribution of God that day on which he will be given his book in his right hand[114] and none of them shall avail him by what they have acquired,[115] nor shall any of his reproof and reprehension be averted that day upon which he comes face to face with the shameful and sinful actions to his account.

May God make me and you my hearers, among those who listen to admonition and do not what angers their Lord and those who amass good deeds to please their Creator, those who abandon acts of disobedience, for the best of admonitions lies in verse and in speech, who distinguish the Signs[116] (given) to those of wit and understanding, with the words of those who distinguish between what is licit and what is forbidden. God aid you and me to lay hold on what is lawful and to avoid what is forbidden and sin. May He deliver and cleanse us of this "Palm-Protection" for it is one of the greatest of sins. May God pardon your sins and mine, by virtue of Muḥammad, child of ʿAdnān; may He guard you and me against the evil of dissension and tribulation. May He set us, of His mercy, in the highest of the Gardens of Paradise, for He is Generous and All-Bestowing. God suffices us, and how excellent a Guardian He is. God bless our Lord Muḥammad, his Family, and Companions. Praise to God, Lord of the Universe.[117]

110 Of the type worn by peasant women. There are several basket types which might be used, a *quffah hadiyyah*, gift basket, in which small presents, usually of food, are sent, *quffah ṭaḥīn*, for flour, and the *maḥmalah*, which contains six to seven *muṣrās*.

111 *Huqlah* was said to mean derision and clapping of the hands. They take out the dates from the covers which act as a sort of bag and throw them away though presumably they would normally be kept for another season.

112 *Tazaywam*, to be filled with a sort of wild frenzy such as affects a bull before copulation or attempting to gore.

113 *Zakāt* cannot of course be dispensed to merely anyone, but the palm warden pays no attention to what *sharīʿah* law lays down in this respect.

114 Reminiscent of Qurʾān 17:71.

115 Presumably as intercessors for him on Judgment Day.

116 I.e., Qurʾānic verses.

117 For further material on dates see my *Prose and Poetry*, Arabic text, secs. 126-33, for a poem on the varieties of date in Ḥaḍramawt and their properties; al-Malik al-Afḍal the Rasūlid, *Bughyat al-fallāḥīn*, eighth/fourteenth century, for date cultivation in the Yemen (MS, my edition in preparation); and for *ʿuhdah*, pledging of property in palms, etc., see my "Materials for South Arabian History," sec. iii. p. 591; a MS on this subject is now available to me.

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